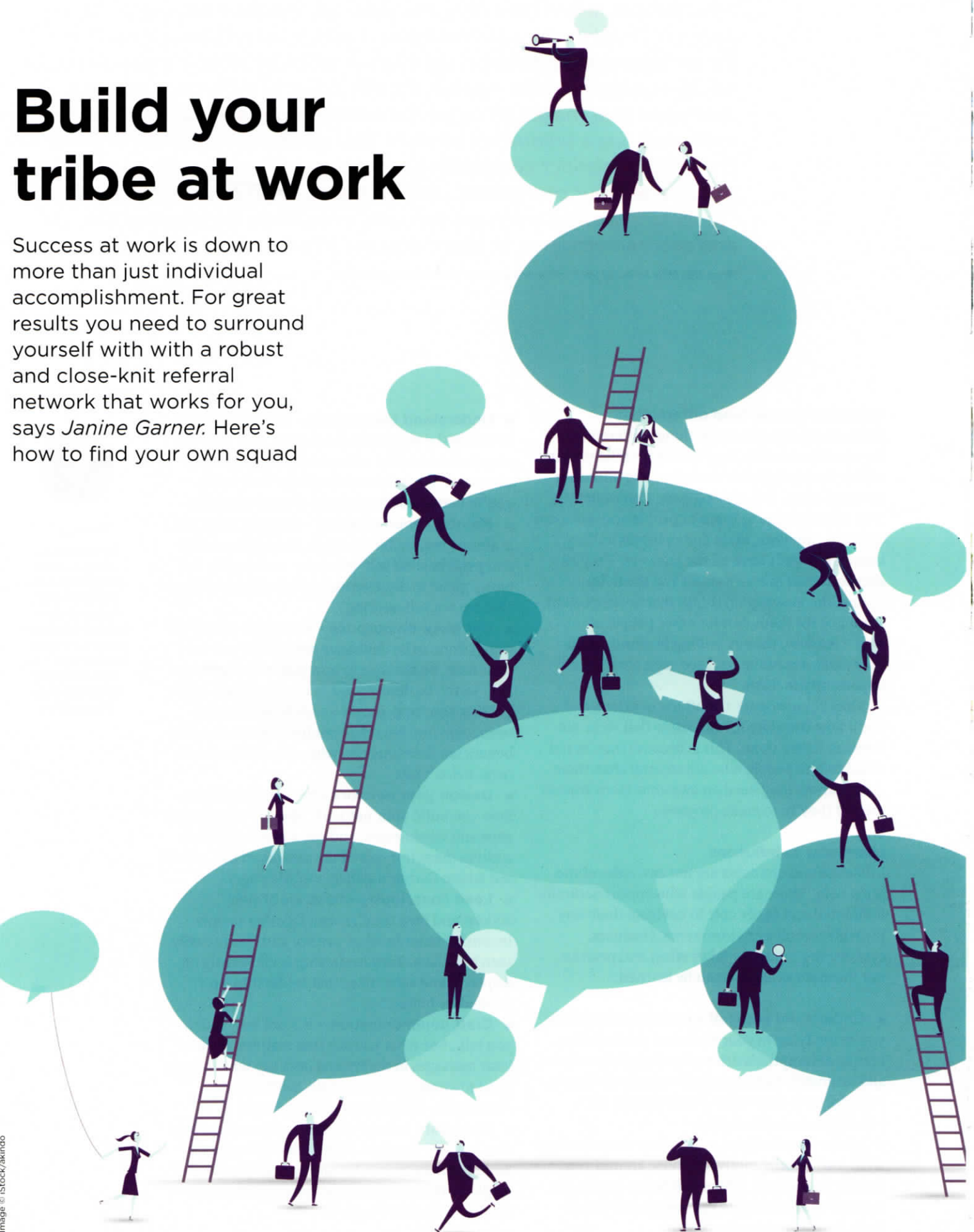


# Build your tribe at work

Success at work is down to more than just individual accomplishment. For great results you need to surround yourself with a robust and close-knit referral network that works for you, says *Janine Garner*. Here's how to find your own squad





#### THE EXPERT

Janine Garner is an internationally-acclaimed Fortune 500 mentor, keynote speaker and author of a popular networking-focused title.

**How many times** have you been told that you really have to network, or that networking is absolutely essential for your professional growth and personal success? And yet when it comes to it, many of us are overwhelmed with the pressure of where to start, confused with what appears to be an over-complicated world of opportunities to connect on and offline and, as extremely busy EAs, over-stretched with the demands on time.

However, individual talent, previous performance successes, educational achievement or even good old self-reliance is no longer enough to survive in the professional world. As a result, we all need a network, whether you're new to a job, hunting for fresh clients or a leader looking at where the next opportunity exists.

The adage 'it's not what you know, it's who you know' has significantly more weight in today's busy world (where jobs are filled before they're advertised and previously unthought-of collaborations appear out of nowhere to create new and competitive markets) but forming referral relationships – something critical to individual and business growth – is increasingly hard to do.

And without any network at all, opportunities are missed, exciting possibilities aren't spotted, your thinking stagnates and, eventually, the career aspirations you once had become unreachable.

A recent *Harvard Business Review* article revealed that executives who consistently rank in the top 20 per cent of their companies in both performance and wellbeing have diverse but select networks. These are said to be made up of high-quality relationships with people from several different spheres and from up and down the corporate hierarchy.

This suggests that effective networking has to be about the genuine: the interplay of a select group of people who are working closely together and strategically creating plans to succeed.

So, how's your network looking? Who's really in it? How much input or influence do they have in what you're doing or trying to achieve? How much do they truly know you and your goals? And just how much can they actually help you?

Not sure? Could it be better? Then follow these three all-important steps to create a network that works for you:

#### 1. Identify your critical few

British anthropologist Robin Dunbar said there was a limit to the number of relationships humans could comfortably maintain – 150, to be precise. He suggested this was the amount with which we could maintain stable relationships, remember each other's names, keep in contact and do each other favours. Anything larger than this, he said, results in the creation of other sub-groups and tribes.

I'd add that momentum starts with a significantly smaller circle of influence with you securely in the centre, rather than mixed in somewhere with all the other participants. It's here that a small group of people providing quality thinking and behaviours push you further than you could ever go alone. This is because an effective network bridges diverse individuals with differing ages, expertise, gender and experience – they're cross-functional, cross-hierarchical and cross-industry, delivering balance and diverse thinking.

So, first up: identify the quality of people you surround yourself with, not the quantity:

#### Find your personal cheer squad (your promoters)

According to research from the Centre For Talent Innovation, people with promoters are 23 per cent more likely to move up in their career than those without. And a 2011 study from the Centre For Work Life Policy, published by the *Harvard Business Review*, found that actively promoting one another can result in as much as a 30 per cent increase in promotions, pay rises and projects for the person being sponsored – evidently, your own personal cheerleading squad is key to your success.

■ So, who are they? They're with you through thick or thin, never give up on you and always dream big with you. Promoters inspire you, pull you towards your dreams, make noise about potential possibilities and spend time with you to explore how you're going to achieve your goals.

#### Get your support team in place (your pit crew)

There's no doubt that climbing the ladder of success can be a lonely task requiring grit, determination and perseverance. And, like a Formula One pit stop, your pit crew can make or break your race. They add stamina to run the marathon of your dreams; to navigate complexities ➤